

The “Wooden World Revealed”: The Archaeology and History of His Majesty’s Sloop of War DeBraak

The wars on land and sea during the late eighteenth century were an important part of Atlantic history, and unite the naval and maritime histories of many countries around the world. Consequently, a British warship named the DeBraak was escorting and protecting a convoy of British and American merchant ships en route to the United States when it was capsized and lost off the Delaware coast on May 25, 1798. With its discovery in the 1980s, the DeBraak and its nearly 20,000 artifacts have provided us an unparalleled opportunity to examine and understand what it meant to be a sailor in the Royal Navy during this critical period. On Saturday, May 3, 1:30 p.m. Charles Fithian, Curator of Archaeology with the State of Delaware Historical and Cultural Affairs Division, will present this special program at the Delaware Public Archives focusing on the DeBraak’s role in the wider historical context of the times, the archaeological analysis of the artifacts found, and what life was like aboard a ship in the Royal Navy.

Mr. Fithian, a resident of Dover, is an historical archaeologist who has directed the research and conservation of the DeBraak and its large associated collection. With a concentration in colonial, military and naval history, Fithian is a graduate of Wesley College and Salisbury University, and has worked for the State of Delaware for more than 27 years. He has also conducted extensive research on 17th century Delaware, the Delaware Regiment during the American Revolution, and the War of 1812.

The program is free to the public. No reservations are required. For more information, contact Tom Summers (302) 744-5047 or e-mail thomas.summers@delaware.gov.

The Delaware Public Archives is located at 121 Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard North in Dover. The Mabel Lloyd Ridgely Research Room is open to the public Monday – Friday from 8 a.m. to 4:15 p.m. On the second Saturday of every month the research room is open from 9 a.m. to 4:15 p.m.